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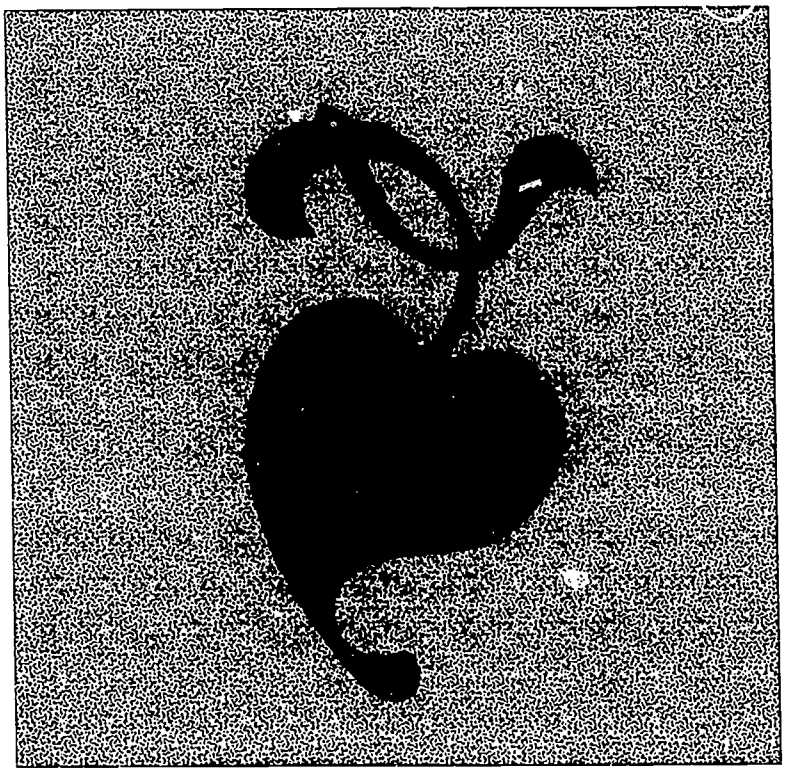
ABSTRACT

The United States is trying to prepare 21st century children with a 19th century, factory-model education system that measures educational quality more by input than by outcomes. Schools must be transformed to meet the needs of a technology-driven information society, producing citizens who can analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and extrapolate its meaning. Fundamental changes in educational values and expectations will require new skills and perspectives, especially among school leaders. The greatest barriers to change are attitudinal. As three vignettes show, there is no one best education system. Schools of the future will rely on new technologies; increased parental, business, and community involvement; and extended service for all ages. The New Hampshire Education Think Tank identified six critical skill areas school leaders will find essential for successful school restructuring. Administrators will have to be effective communicators, facilitators, analysts and planners, educators, technologists, and politicians. Closer attention must be paid to the educational methods and content used to prepare school administrators. Professional preparation programs must be restructured to emphasize more field-based and collaborative work. Included are an executive summary and a bibliography of 74 references. (MLH)

Leadership for Change



Prepared by the NH Education Think Tank
New Hampshire LEADership Center

May 1992

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Leadership for Change

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The New Hampshire public school system is beyond tinkering. We do not have a system that is simply soft or that can be repaired with only minimal effort. Like school systems all over the country, the New Hampshire educational system requires fundamental restructuring.

Governor's Task Force on Education
Executive Summary
(December 1990)

To address the need for consumers, citizens, and competent workers, as well as to address some of our very complicated societal issues, we will have to fundamentally restructure our school systems.

What Should They Be Able to Do?
Business and Industry Association
of New Hampshire
(January 1991)

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Background and Acknowledgements

"Leadership for Change" is the result of more than two years of study and discussion by the New Hampshire Education Think Tank—a group of policy makers, school administrators and teachers, government leaders, business executives, school board members, and university professors. This group was brought together in 1989 by the New Hampshire LEADership Center, University of New Hampshire. The Think Tank's purpose was to investigate the skills and knowledge needed by school leaders in the 21st Century. The Think Tank's quarterly meetings included in-depth discussion of extensive readings on education. A suggested reading list generated by the Think Tank is found at the end of this document.

The Think Tank had five goals in publishing "Leadership for Change":

(1) guide development of pre-service and in-service programs for school leaders;

(2) highlight, for future state certification, skills needed by school leaders;

(3) provide school leaders guidelines for the direction of their self-managed, ongoing education;

(4) alert school boards to the changing expectations for school leaders so they can make wise choices as they recruit educators; and

(5) contribute to the growing discussion of the need for fundamental changes in public education and education leadership.

Deep thanks go to the more than 30 Think Tank members who contributed generous amounts of time, energy, and careful thought as they investigated the pressing issue of education and educational leadership. Thanks also are extended to Bruce Mallory and Katharine Eneguess, who served as meeting facilitators. Special thanks go to Catharine Wolff for writing and editing assistance; to Rachel Hopkins, Elenore Freedman, and William Ewert, for proofreading the report; and to Fay Jeys, Kristen Erickson, and Micki Canfield, who tirelessly typed countless revisions.

Executive Summary

The United States is trying to prepare 21st Century children with a 19th Century education system. It is a system that measures the quality of education more by input (prescribed curriculum, student-teacher ratios) than by outcome (how well students think critically, retrieve information, work collaboratively). It is a factory model with assembly line teaching rather than customized learning plans for each student. It is a system, when measured against the current needs of society, that is fundamentally not working.

Schools must be transformed to meet the needs of a technology-driven information society, producing citizens who can analyze information, synthesize it, evaluate its worth, and extrapolate its meaning. Schools must teach or at least help teach such values as responsibility, self-esteem, self-management, and integrity. And they must provide an education that will allow United States workers to compete in a global economy where more than 80 percent of the jobs will soon require skilled labor.

Serious change—personal, corporate, or social—is rarely easy and often frightening. Obstacles to change are not just excuses for resistance. They are real issues or situations that must be identified and dealt with seriously, respectfully, creatively, and patiently before change can occur. Perhaps the greatest barriers to school restructuring are attitudinal—both among educators and the public.

Fundamental changes in educational values and expectations will require new skills and perspectives, especially among those who lead schools. Changes in traditional leadership characteristics and attitudes underpin many of the new skills. The knowledge and skills necessary for effective leadership must match the changing nature of schools of the future where we will see increased collaboration with community partners, new roles for technology in instruction and management, and restructured forms of governance.

The New Hampshire Education Think Tank identified six critical skill areas school leaders will find essential for successful school restructuring. They are not the only skills administrators need, but they are areas where the greatest changes will be seen.

1. **Communicator**—Communication has always been an important part of a school administrator's job, but, with restructuring and its demands for network building, certain communication skills need to be emphasized, including, and perhaps most important, finely-tuned listening, questioning, and synthesizing skills.

2. **Facilitator**—Leaders will have to learn to facilitate school-based resolutions of crises and conflicts. Leaders need to know how to build consensus, understand motivation, manage conflict, negotiate resolutions, and run meetings.

3. **Analyst and Planner**—Leaders must enter a school district asking questions. It is critically important for education leaders to identify, analyze, and understand the local culture of both the schools and community. Analysis alone is not enough. It must be used to develop strategic plans for the schools. A collective vision will have a strength that comes from group ownership to carry plans through to action.

4. **Educator**—School leaders will be educational leaders. Principals will be viewed as master teachers. Superintendents and other central office staff will have specific areas of expertise and will spend much more time sharing their expertise with school based teams.

5. **Technologist**—School leaders need to use technology to manage student data, initiate changes, and monitor budgets. They need to embrace new technology for classrooms and understand how technology can reform the way students learn.

6. **Politician**—School leaders need to develop more sophisticated political knowledge and skills. They need to understand the official and unofficial political avenues in their town, their state, and the federal level.

Closer attention must be paid to the educational methods and content used to prepare school administrators. Just as schools need to be restructured, so do professional preparation programs for education leaders. They need to emphasize more field-based and collaborative work. School leaders must be encouraged to continue their education.

The road to educational restructuring will be long and complex. Adequately preparing and supporting school administrators is a critical first step. The Think Tank encourages state legislators, policy makers, school board members, parents, higher education professors and administrators, health and human service providers, and business leaders to help meet this challenge.

Introduction

Change in the New Hampshire public education system needs to go far beyond curriculum and textbooks, relations of teachers and administrators, class size, and length of school year. All these are of concern, but change in attitude and expectation, and, in many cases, in basic educational philosophy is also needed. Such change occurs incrementally. The kinds of new learning structures suggested by the three vignettes in this report will require careful, planned, step-by-step implementation with constant monitoring and adjustment by all the stakeholders involved. For such change to succeed and make a lasting difference, superintendents and principals must be the key figures in creating a culture of change and guiding others into new forms of governance, instruction, and community involvement.

Restructuring schools cannot be achieved by educators alone. Parents, policy makers, business leaders, school board members, higher education professors and administrators, legislators, and health and human services representatives must all be included in the process. There have been numerous descriptions and analyses of the problems of public education. Almost none of these has addressed the particular role of school leaders* in the process of restructuring and reform. This document is intended to help catalyze and guide an urgently needed, widespread, and in-depth discussion of education and the skills and knowledge needed by school leaders.

*Throughout this document, "school leaders" refers primarily to individuals traditionally called superintendents, assistant superintendents, principals, and assistant principals; that is, people employed to carry out the policies of a school district and assure the overall quality of education. Classroom teachers often play leadership roles and will do so increasingly in the future. Elected school board members also serve as educational leaders. The emphasis in this report is on th[illegible]rst group. Future New Hampshire LEADership Center efforts will focus more on the latter groups.

Obstacles to Change

Serious change—personal, corporate, or social—is rarely easy and often frightening. Just ask anyone who has switched professions, moved a family across the country, or been caught in a revolution. Corporations have paid consultants millions of dollars to develop reorganization plans, only to file them away "until the right time," which seldom comes. In a public institution as pervasive, emotionally-charged, and complex as the educational system, resistance is often very strong even toward small changes, much less systemic ones.

Obstacles to change are not just excuses for resistance. They are real issues or situations that must be identified and dealt with seriously, respectfully, creatively, and patiently before change can occur.

Perhaps the greatest barriers to school restructuring are attitudinal—among educators and the public. Some educators do not agree that governance, instructional practices, or student-outcome changes are necessary. Many might say improvements would be nice, but are impossible. In the general public there is a lack of respect for education. Some groups even appear to advocate the abandonment rather than reform of public education. There is little public understanding of the "higher-order" thinking skills that need to be taught. For instance, the public becomes incensed at reports that a large number of American children do not know the location of Canada, while few wonder how many children know how to find out where Canada is located.

Other barriers exist, including the physical layout of many schools, that may not be easily adapted to cooperative learning or technological use. Technological equipment and supplies are limited in many districts and, even where there is adequate hardware, teachers and school administrators may have limited knowledge of how best to use the equipment.

Restructuring schools demands retraining in many areas, especially in the philosophy and practice of collaboration. Not only is it difficult for educators to find the time for such training, there also are few programs currently in existence that address those skills.

Current conceptions of roles in the education system must be overcome. School boards must view superintendents as professional consultants. Superintendents and principals must be given the time and support to be leaders, not just managers. State education agencies and boards, teacher organizations, school boards, and school administrators have a vested interest in the current structure. For fundamental restructuring, there needs to be a willingness to relax control, including amending or abandoning regulations, laws, and contract language that hinder restructuring. There must be expanded cooperative arrangements to seek new solutions to problems.

In addition, the public, as well as educators, needs to be actively engaged in reforming the schools. In order for change to occur, there must be a common belief that improvement is possible and essential, a commitment to the general direction of that reform, and a strong, long-term desire to support that change.

provide tremendous frustration and expense in the long run. Their goals included a computer terminal for every student, extra computers to be used in the community by parents, and continuous technical support, including software and hardware updates for five years.

Three of them—Dr. Garcia, the consultant, and Musho's CEO—began contacting computer companies. At Widget Corp. they found a receptive community relations department looking for a model project. After much discussion, the company agreed to the plan. Several other computer companies also signed on to provide some of the equipment that could interface with the central Widget system. They agreed to set up special television studios in the schools for closed-circuit, interactive, satellite programming.

During the day, the interactive system satisfies the prior problems of teacher recruitment and vacancies in Inner City. For instance, a university biologist 50 miles away supervises, via satellite, several science laboratories. Teachers also are brought electronically to the school from other nations, especially for teaching foreign languages. During the evenings, these interactive studios are used by businesses and community members for conferences and educational programs.

The PTA, revitalized by being given a challenging and significant job to do, stays in touch with parents, contacting them personally at home or work. The Neighborhood Learning Centers, established by the schools, teach parents about computers and provide a place for them to monitor their child's work, via computer. Parents are required to sign-off on their child's work once a week, either via computer or in person. If parents choose not to participate, the PTA recruits other adults to meet once a week with the student and review work. Regular communication is possible among all levels of education via computer networks. Musho has provided low-interest purchase plans for home computers and modems.

Each student receives an individual learning plan. There are four teachers responsible for each group of 120 students. The teachers' tasks are to guide and assess student progress and/or develop cooperative learning arrangements so students may individually or in small groups pursue their learning plans primarily through technology link-ups and small group projects. The learning plans include a full listing of outcomes for each student during the year. If a student achieves the plan in less time, the student immediately moves to the next year's learning plan. Technology's ability to facilitate resource-based learning has meant that all students have more access to more information than ever before.

Three Vignettes

There will be no one best system of education for the future. Instead there will be different models of schools meeting different needs. The Education Think Tank discussed in some detail what schools might look like in the next century. Schools of the future will rely on new technologies; increased parental, business, and community involvement and extended service for all ages. There will be less centralized bureaucratic control and increased focus on critical skills. Student assessment strategies will be reevaluated and schools will become a community of learners for all staff and students. Changes will occur whether schools are rural, suburban or urban, homogeneous or diverse, rich or poor.

The following are three hypothetical vignettes that illustrate some of the changes likely to occur in the next century. *These samples are in no way expected to be prescriptive for schools of tomorrow. They are offered as examples of how dramatically school systems may change and to highlight the need for appropriately prepared school leaders.*

The Role of New Technologies

Jane Garcia knew she faced major challenges when she accepted the job of superintendent of Inner City's schools, but she had a strategy for school improvement. The overwhelming majority of students of Inner City came from low-income families where English was not a first language. Teachers were hard to recruit, classrooms overcrowded, and school buildings in disrepair. Dr. Garcia believed technology and parent involvement were the keys to turning the district around. Both elements had the potential of increasing the focus on each individual student without the cost of reducing student/teacher ratios.

Dr. Garcia and school principals enlisted the support of a computer consultant and the president of Musho's Shoes, the city's largest employer, to develop a plan and generate citywide support for the changes. They planned to solicit contributions for equipment from technology firms and decided not to settle for token contributions, knowing a patchworked or non-compatible technology system would

The high school principal and superintendent are making arrangements with community colleges to allow students of any age who have completed the expected 12-year program of study to enroll in college.

There is still a school board in Inner City, which meets directly with teachers and parents. School administrators serve as professional consultants to the process. Seeking to save money and reduce the number of on-staff administrators, Inner City now contracts with private businesses to handle the district's transportation, food, and custodial services.

Linking Schools to Community Needs

The schools may well have been the healthiest part of Hometown when Jim Iscander was elected to the school board. Agribusiness had forced family farmers to find jobs in one of the four small factories in town. But then most of the factories folded, leaving only the Jones Lumber Company. Unemployment soared and, despite generational roots, people began to leave town. Scores of abandoned houses, and dozens of others with dusty "For Sale" signs lined Hometown's oak-shaded streets.

So when the state decided to deregulate schools—giving local school boards the chance to restructure their approaches to education—Iscander, the superintendent, and a few other board members saw it as a potential opportunity to help the entire community. Even though they thought they knew fairly well the town's major problems, they decided to start slowly, interviewing dozens of people in the town. Lack of jobs, loss of youth (especially college-educated youth), and a dearth of medical services were the concerns most often voiced.

Iscander and his colleagues knew that to address these worries would take more than a school board. In a rare act of relinquishing power, the board created a Town Education Council, carefully outlining its tasks and choosing its members: the school superintendent, a local contractor, a bank president, the CEO of Jones Lumber Company, the head of the Chamber of Commerce, and the president of a local telephone company. Although the Council reports to the board, the board meets only four times a year to review the progress of the schools, develop long-range plans, and monitor the Council's work. The board remains legally responsible for the schools, but has grown comfortable entrusting much of that responsibility to others, including a CPA firm that handles the district's finances.

Students are selected for three or four cooperative learning groups. Almost all cooperative group work includes some apprenticeship or practicum in the community with detailed expected outcomes, short and long range. The principals work with teachers to insure that basic skills are embedded in the discipline of the practica. The assessment of a student's work is made through portfolio review and testing based on each group's goals. The portfolios often include video tapes of students' work and sample products. The outcomes of groups are constantly monitored by the Council and school administrators.

Each Council member assumes responsibility for increasing the services of the school. For example, the Chamber of Commerce member gives regular updates on efforts to attract new business to the community, allowing the Council to consider future job and education possibilities. The building contractor, working with town officials, identifies abandoned buildings that can be easily renovated. Working with a few teachers, he develops a program that will use student workers, allowing them to learn building trades while earning high school credit and helping the town. This new space will be used as it becomes available to house the pressing needs of day care for the young and elderly, followed by a variety of social service programs for adults and children.

At the same time, the banker on the Council sets up a low-interest mortgage loan for recent high school graduates so they will have the opportunity to buy their own homes. The banker is now working on a similar low-interest business loan program, aimed at Hometown High School graduates who want to start their own businesses. The Lumber Company's CEO is focusing on his factory's in-house medical facility, the only health service in town. At present, the infirmary is intended to provide care only for lumber employees, but he hopes to develop a plan so the facility can be available eventually to the entire community for health education, as well as health services.

Using an old Grange Hall and working with the high school renovation team, the Council creates a community learning center. The telephone company president taps his resources and contacts to equip the center with interactive, closed-circuit TV and the school superintendent negotiates with colleges and universities in the state to provide courses—live and via TV. The hope of the Council in suggesting this course of action was to encourage some of the town's brightest youth to seek their college education at home, at the same time giving adults the chance to "go to college" while never leaving Hometown.

New Forms of Governance and Decision Making

Henry Smith was ecstatic and scared. For the first time in the 25 years that he had been running his own management consulting firm, a client had decided to take all of his advice. Now the question was, would it work?

Smith's agency had been called in by the school board of Clearview, a middle-class, suburban town. As with most of Smith's clients, the school board members knew they had problems and needed help. They wanted to keep their traditional model school. However, to do this, considering the serious past problems, seemed impossible.

Clearview's problems, going back years, included a series of superintendents who lacked the support of teachers and the community; a teachers' union that had negotiated a strong, pro-teacher contract at the cost of public support; a tremendous amount of bickering among administrators and teachers; and a general widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of education. But the real problems came when the state approved an open enrollment plan and 25 percent of Clearview's students elected to attend another public school in the state, with Clearview bearing the cost. The town had to cut back on its staff, terminating the newest teachers and keeping the higher-salaried senior teachers. This trend was coupled with more than half of Clearview's students failing to meet state-set performance standards at each grade level.

Smith conducted a three-month study, under contract with the school board. His prediction was that within three years, if things remained the same, more than half of Clearview students would choose to attend other schools. He devised a plan and the board, to his amazement, decided to seek state board approval. Even more surprising, the approval was granted.

Basically, the plan called for the school board to "start from scratch," terminating all staff, administrators, and teachers: voiding existing contracts and radically rewriting new ones. It proposed major reductions in the number of administrators. The positions of superintendent and principals were retained along with one central office facilitators/administrators who handled the district's budgets and administration of food, custodial, and transportation services. But added to each job description was the expectation that their major tasks would be supporting and providing technical assistance for local school teams and principals.

The new plan called for bids from groups of teachers. The bids were to include detailed designs of education programs guaranteeing that 200 students served by the bidding teachers would meet state standards and be prepared to enter an occupation or college by the end of their twelfth year. The bid vested teachers with responsibility for a recruitment plan as well as responsibility for reduction in costs if fewer than 200 students were recruited by their plan.

Contracts were then awarded to teacher groups with an understanding that they would remain with the same group of students for two or three years, provided that student scores remained competitive. Blocks of time for contracts per teacher group were kindergarten through third grade, fourth through seventh, eighth through tenth, and eleventh through twelfth.

An independent advisory board was established by the parents of the students in each teacher group. The advisory board was expected to work closely with the teachers. Both the advisory board and the teachers reported directly to the school board every month. Their reports focused on student progress and plans to correct problems. The principals and the superintendent were primarily responsible for facilitation of these meetings, technical and educational advice, conflict management, and clarifying state expectations for student programs.

These three vignettes are provided as examples of schools for tomorrow. We do not expect that they will be the only models for schools of the future, nor that they will be mutually exclusive from each other. We do believe that great shifts in our educational systems, such as those illustrated in these vignettes, need to occur in order to effectively prepare our young people for the 21st Century.

Leadership for Change

Fundamental changes in educational values, expectations, and management will require new skills and perspectives, especially among those who would guide the schools. Changes in traditional leadership character and attitude underpin many of the new skills.

Leaders must want to learn as well as teach; to listen as well as talk. They must truly believe that shared information, responsibility, and power create a stronger organization. They must be willing to let people take informed risks and be accountable for them; to see change as a constantly reevaluated process, not a matter of win or lose. They must encourage diversity of opinions and use it as a catalyst for change. They must believe that each child can learn and that the means to teach each child exist. They must have a vision that can be shared and challenged. They must lead through action and example, not merely prescription and delegation.

The New Hampshire Education Think Tank identified six critical skill areas school leaders will find essential for successful school restructuring. They are not the only skills administrators need, but they are areas where the greatest shift away from traditional skills will be seen.

Communicator

Communication has always been an important part of a school administrator's job, explaining a new program or budget to the school board, giving a speech at a Rotary Club luncheon, writing articulate memos that clearly explain new regulations, programs, or policies. As the need to "sell" education has grown, so have demands for school leaders to expand their communication skills, including learning how to use the media, writing for professional journals and general publications, and polishing their public speaking.

These skills remain important. But with restructuring, leaders become less directors than network-builders. Different kinds of communication skills are needed, including, and

perhaps most important, finely-tuned listening, questioning, and synthesizing skills. The foundation of restructured schools will be to widely share and clearly articulate core values. Methods to hear the community's concerns about education and to synthesize this information into a cohesive vision that is shared with all is a demanding communication job.

Most administrators, CEOs, and line workers understand that information is power. If restructuring means a wider sharing of decision making, then information must be shared widely, both inside and outside the system. Superintendents and principals must develop communication networks that will be quick, accurate, and two-way. They must use, and get others to use, those networks effectively.

The most effective mode of communication is by example. If an administrator's style is to direct rather than question, to control rather than invest, to tell rather than show; that will be reflected in any restructuring. School leaders must keep learning, questioning, reading, reflecting, and practicing critical and creative thinking if they expect that of their staffs and students.

Facilitator

School administrators have always been seen as troubleshooters, expected to solve problems, often with a unilateral decision. That is part of the "buck-stops-here-at-the-lonely-top" traditional role. With restructuring, leaders will have to learn to facilitate school-based resolutions of crises and conflicts. Leaders need to know how to build consensus, understand motivation, manage conflict, negotiate resolutions, and run meetings.

They will have to know how to foster leadership in the schools and create environments that encourage continual improvement and risk taking. Instead of monitoring, supervising, and directing change; leaders will be expected to coach and mentor people, clarify information, and keep attention focused on goals.

Analyst and Planner

A personal vision, good instincts, and a lot of energy, although still important qualities in any leader, are not enough to help guide a school system through restructuring. Leaders must enter a school district asking questions. It is critically important for education leaders to identify, analyze, and understand the local culture of both the schools and community. This is especially tru . of administrators who were not born and reared in the communities where they are working and for those who did not come up through the ranks of the school system. There is no guarantee that even "natives" objectively understand their own culture.

Every organization has its own web of values, norms, worldview, power balances, and self-perceptions. Understanding this culture and respecting its strength is essential if change is to be effective and long lasting.

Analysis alone is not enough. Without systematic, data-driven strategic plans, a school system risks continuing to be reactive rather than proactive. School leaders must familiarize themselves with the extensive research on change and implementation and make sure they do not try to develop plans in a vacuum. A variety of school and community members must be involved in all stages of planning. A collective vision will have a strength that comes from group ownership to carry plans through to action.

Educator

Most superintendents and principals were once teachers, with a love of learning and a desire to help others learn. But the rigorous demands of administering, monitoring, supervising, and troubleshooting almost inevitably divert an administrator's attention from education.

Restructured schools will change this. School leaders will be educational leaders. Principals will be viewed as master teachers, providing technical assistance and support to teachers, encouraging them to work on quality each day. Superintendents and other central office staff will have specific areas of expertise, such as technologies, critical and

creative thinking, or cooperative learning, and will spend much more of their time sharing their expertise through technical assistance, team building, or directing staff development activities.

The restructured school will begin with a focus on the students as lifelong learners. Staff roles, relationships, and responsibilities will flow from what students need. An understanding and support of child-centered education is essential to produce students who have been taught to think rather than memorize. Leaders will use a wide variety of assessment practices to guide instructional practices.

Technologist

Wider use of computers, laser discs, videos, telecommunications, and other technology is as inevitable in schools as it is in other parts of society. Properly integrated and used, technology provides new ways for teachers and students to learn how to access, retrieve, understand, and distribute information. Such technology already is changing the operations of many school offices.

School leaders need to use technology to manage student data, initiate changes, and monitor budgets. They need to embrace new technology for classrooms and understand how technology can reform the way students learn.

Politician

Successful school leaders almost always are political. They know how to balance out the interests of constituents; who in town to turn to when support is needed; whose toes not to step on; and, with widely varying degrees of success, how to garner public and political support for a budget. Most of their political dealings are informal and locally-based.

As education finds itself increasingly competing with other social institutions for scarce resources and as active interest in public education broadens, school leaders need to develop more sophisticated political knowledge and skills. They need to understand the official and unofficial political avenues in their town, the state, and at the federal levels.

Implications for Professional Preparation

The level of sophistication of some of the skills needed by educators to help carry out transformation in schools is well beyond what is generally being taught in current certification and post-certification programs. Just as schools need to be restructured, so do professional preparation programs for education leaders. They need to emphasize more field-based and collaborative work.

The programs must include on-site practica in model school districts, internships in state or federal agencies and legislatures, and perhaps even in businesses. Students need to apply theoretical knowledge in contexts that demand solving real problems. Just as the modes of teaching and learning need to be changed in public schools, so must they be changed in the arenas where the future leaders of those schools are taught. The value of school decision making and other collaborative learning must not be relegated to a chapter in a book, but actively applied in the professional development curriculum.

Practicing school administrators also need mentors, models, coaches, and advocates to help guide and support them in learning new skills and expanding old ones. Peer interaction and support groups are essential, providing time to discuss professional challenges and develop strategies to address problems.

Final Remarks

Schools must change as the world has changed—profoundly. They must be transformed to meet the needs of a technology-driven information society, producing citizens who can analyze information, synthesize it, evaluate its worth, and extrapolate its meaning. Schools must teach or at least help teach such values as responsibility, self-esteem, self-management, and integrity. And they must provide an education that will allow United States workers to compete in a global economy where more than 80 percent of the jobs will soon require skilled labor.

Some schools and school districts have begun the long, complex process of restructuring. Many have just begun talking about it. The difference may often be found in the local educational leaders. Without clear and consistent commitment of school leaders, restructuring education to meet the needs of the 21st Century is doomed. A critical first step in changing education is to give administrators the skills and understandings necessary for the task.

The training of new administrators must also be restructured as profoundly as the schools these administrators will lead. New skills must be taught, new visions shared, and new modes of instruction explored. Current school leaders must be encouraged to continue, or renew, their education and to understand and embrace new role expectations. Such demands on school leaders—and the years of risk and hard work they entail—require deep community support.

The New Hampshire Education Think Tank urges state legislators, policy makers, school board members, parents, higher education professors and administrators, health and human service providers, and business leaders to explore ways they can work cooperatively with school administrators, offering them support, aid, and guidance in meeting the challenges of change.

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